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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID MARR RS CH GG

SUBJECT: GEORGIAN DIPLOMAT LAMENTS LACK OF CHINESE SUPPORT

REF: A. 2008 BEIJING 03122

B. 2008 BEIJING 03361

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Georgia has received "practically nothing" from China since the Russia-Georgia conflict began in August 2008, a contact at the Georgian Embassy in Beijing told PolOff February 11. The Georgian diplomat expressed disappointment with China's limited assistance and unwillingness to publicly oppose separatist movements in Georgia. According to our contact, the Georgian Embassy's lack of an ambassador has hampered efforts to engage China, but the Georgian Embassy was "pleasantly surprised" by an apology from Xinhua News Agency for biased reporting on the conflict. End Summary.

"Practically Nothing" from China

¶12. (C) In spite of private expressions of support for Georgia's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, China has given Georgia "practically nothing" since the Russia-Georgia conflict began in August 2008, Georgian diplomat Archil Kalandia told PolOff February 11. He expressed disappointment that Chinese officials have not been willing to publicly oppose the separatist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, although he said Chinese MFA officials have privately assured Georgian Embassy officials that China would not recognize the independence of the breakaway provinces. According to Kalandia, China never responded to Georgia's request for de-mining equipment (ref B) and has not provided any humanitarian assistance since its August 2008 donation of 1 million Chinese yuan (approximately USD 145,000) to help victims of the conflict.

Waiting for a New Ambassador, Hoping for a High-Level Visit

¶13. (C) Kalandia said the Georgian Embassy's efforts to engage the Chinese have been hampered by the lack of an ambassador. Georgia's new prime minister had changed a number of ambassadors, he said, including former Ambassador to China Zaza Begashvili, who left Beijing in December 2008 after serving for only six months. Kalandia expected Georgia's new Ambassador to China, former Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the Czech Republic Karlo Sikharulidze, to press the Chinese for greater support and to engage more with China's influential think tanks after he arrives in mid-March. According to Kalandia, the Georgian Embassy was also lobbying the Chinese MFA to include Georgia on the itinerary of China's top legislator, National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo, who is reportedly planning a June trip to Armenia.

Xinhua Apology is Lone Bright Spot

¶4. (C) Kalandia said the Georgian Embassy was "pleasantly surprised" to receive an apology from China's state-run Xinhua News Agency in response to Embassy protests to Xinhua for translating and publishing on its website biased Russian press reports about the Russia-Georgia conflict. He said Xinhua had removed the biased reports from its website and commented that Xinhua's reporting on the Russia-Georgia conflict was now more objective.

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